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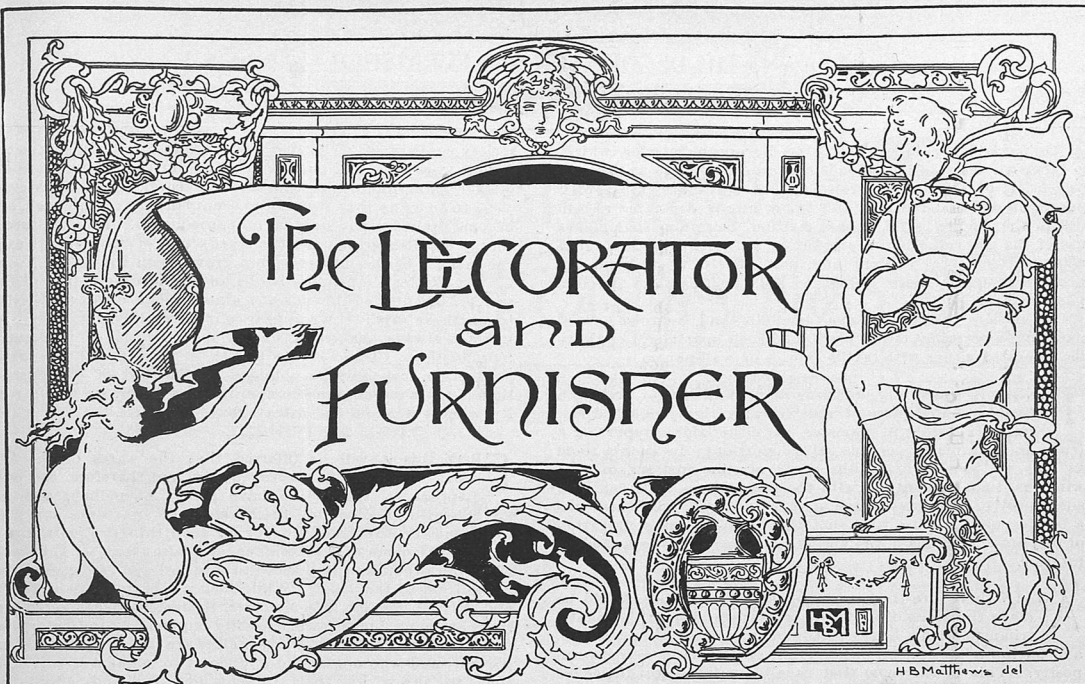
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### CONTENTS OF THIS NUMBER.

	PAGE
Art-Trades Supplement	191
Editorials	163
FURNITURE AND FURNISHINGS—American Furniture of To-Day, with Illustration of Colonial Sideboard, Sideboard in the Renaissance Style, and Examples of American Factory Work. By James Thomson.	163-167
European and American Decoration	168
Illustration of High-class European Decoration—Boudoir in the Japanese Style.	168
Illustration of Middle class American Furnishing—a Parlor in the Occidental Style	169
Decorative Notes	169, 172, 176
Venetian Art Glass. By Mrs. S. A. Brock Putnam.	170
Architectural League Designs.—Sitting Room for A. J. Loomis, Esq., Hartford, Conn.—Hall in the House of Mrs. Simeon Andrews, Greenwich, Conn.—Cartoon for Window in City Hall, Cincinnati, O.	172
Society of Arts and Crafts, London. Fourth Exhibition. Illustration of Inlaid Side-board and Chair, by Reginald Bloomfield—Chimney Breast and Grate, by George Jack—Mantelpiece, by The Coalbrookdale Co.—A Novel Piano Case, by W. F. Cave—Lady's Work Cabinet, by Mr. F. C. A. Voysey. By Ada Cone.	173-176
DECORATIVE TEXTILE FABRICS—Parisian Lamp Shades, by Flaneur—Illustrations of Upholstered Chair and fac-simile of Bible belonging to Queen Elizabeth, by the Royal School of Needlework, England—Embroidered Silk Cushion, by Agnes Freuding, of Sweden—Embroidered Linen Toilet Table Drapery, by Madame Narschkine's School, Russia.	177-178
Studies of Parisian Drapery	179
The Loom in Eastern Art.	179
Illustration of Persian Carpet	180
MURAL DECORATION—The Decoration of the Ho-o-den—Illustration of Jodan-no-ma—The Ramma, or Frieze, and Wall Panels.	181-183
Interior of the County Court Chamber, Toronto, Canada. By Morgan Martin Renner.	184
Decoration of the County Court Room in the above. By Morgan Martin Renner.	185
Drawing-Room Decorated with H. Bartholomae's Wall Paper.	186
AMATEUR HOUSE DECORATIONS—Circular Panel and Spandril with Bird Motives. By H. B. Matthews	197
Oriental Flat, An. By Mrs. Frederic Von Schrader	198
Hints on House Furnishing	199
Answers to Correspondence	199
Illustrations of Lady's Writing Desk Closed, and Lady's Writing Desk Open.	199
Floral Designs for Four Dollies. By Walter Crane.	199
Pen Drawing. Design for a Title Page. By Francis D. Bedford.	199

THERE is a decorative sanity in choosing styles and methods. There is a happy harmony between the house, the man, and his furnishings that should be striven for at all hazards.

SOMETHING very pretentious, something very costly, makes everything else look cheap and thin, and itself by contrast pretentious and burdensome.

WHY this eternal convention of machine-made panelings? Why these caskets of wood to surround the living soul? They may be rich, but they are hard and dead. It resembles the veneering of respectability that gilds the savagery of modern life.

WE are the friend of wood when it is used in its proper place, and we think that the modern artistic mantel-piece, made of carved and polished wood, surrounding a fireplace faced with glazed tiles, otherwise decorated with brass fender and andirons, the mantel itself being beautiful with beveled mirror panel, is one of the most decorative appurtenances of modern house building. It has happily superseded the old time decorative bugbear of a high mantelpiece, a frowning ponderosity of pillars, shelves, mirrors and niches, crowned with a hydrocephalic entablature. The old high mantel was as stuffy in style as is the frequent use of an Oriental rug for a table cloth.

THOSE firms who manufacture wood appliqué for interiors would naturally like to persuade the public that the only proper decoration for an apartment is to sheathe walls and ceiling with wooden paneling, and of late years they have had things pretty much their own way. There are signs of an emancipation from our being compelled to live in wooden caskets, that is to say, rooms wherein the flooring, wainscoting, dado, frieze, trimming of doors and windows, mantel pieces and ceilings are composed of paneled wood. Halls and dining rooms are, in many cases, completely sheathed with wood, whereas a much better decorative effect could be obtained by covering walls and ceiling panels with either painted tapestry or any of the choice patterns in wall-paper or other materials provided for the decoration of such places.

On page 168 we show a high class European interior, which, so far as the mural decoration is concerned, seems to us the very perfection of modern decoration. The walls are filled with panels of embroidered silk, and the ceiling is decorated also in silk in the canopy style, such a method being one that makes use of the greatest possible amount of sentiment, textile fabrics being softer, more brilliant and, particularly when hand embroidered, much more seductive and poetic than wooden paneling.

In parlors, drawing-rooms, boudoirs and bedrooms, wood paneling is certainly out of place, and such apartments ought to be decorated either with textile fabrics or wall-paper.

THERE is something ludicrous in a small parlor, having a gigantic mantelpiece of marble, with highly polished columns six inches in diameter at either side, supporting a frieze and entablature of colossal proportions. In such a room as this we usually find thin, sheer muslin curtains on the windows, that, by contrast with the mantelpiece, look cold and consumptive. Doubtless, each of these decorative features was a fashion once upon a time, but this exasperating aggregation of disjointed fashions is the decorative crime of many a modern interior.

A GAIN there are those who believe that mantels should be made the scene of a display of drapery. Perish the mantel trimmed with a heavy textile board, termed a lambrequin, and on top a large mirror encased in a gilt frame of carved pomposity. This is the room that usually contains spindle-legged chairs in gilt, splay-legged Colonial rockers, and has China plates on the walls.

THERE are those again who will be plain and simple in their surroundings. There are those who will use only the purest white linen for the dining-table, but their fault is being offensively dogmatic about it.

THERE are those who insist on painting the walls of their parlor in a uniformly cold tint of French gray, claiming that it sets off their pictures to the best possible advantage, but such men may be offensively proud of their Quakerish simplicity.

THE aim of the Arts and Crafts Society of London is a good one. Their evident object is to create a society of art workmen founded on the love of a spirit of emulation, to the end that its members will develop and perpetuate in themselves the qualities best fitted for success. Natural selection, in their society, as elsewhere, will lead to the survival of the fittest, just as throughout nature, whether in the icy poles, or in the glowing tropics, natural selection prevails, fitting the animal to its environment.

Such an ideal is, of course, antagonistic to the ideal of modern society, which seeks to profit by giving the least and getting the most in every transaction, a success in a hostile struggle based upon pure selfishness, greed, and a sharp eye for one's neighbors weak points—an unswerving determination to take advantage of that weakness, a fertility of resource in making a useless thing appear valuable when selling, and in depreciating what is good when buying; these and all other requisites for piling up profits have made cozening one of the conspicuous fine arts of the nineteenth century, by virtue of that principle of natural selection, which, in an environment of slime, develops the crawling and creeping things fitted to thrive in it.

UNDER such conditions there is no time to think of beauty. Man must live, and for the large majority there is no chance for their being able to make life beautiful. Art is the blossom, not the root of human life; but if the blossom do not appear, or is deformed, we know that the root is unsound. But what kind of a blossom of art has the Arts and Crafts produced?

ON page 173 our London correspondent reviews the Arts and Crafts Exhibition recently held in that city. Many of the pieces exhibited were of marvelous beauty, but it is to be regretted that a more cosmopolitan taste did not prevail in the design and execution of the various art products. The

society consists of a brotherhood of pre-Raphaelites, who are devout worshippers of mediævalism, and in their blind adoration of everything quaint, morbid and mediæval, have apparently come to imagine that there is no beauty in any other epoch, and become exclusive and narrow in consequence. Their culture is simply an alien graft upon the sturdy tree of modern art after the manner of the mistletoe that grows upon the oak.

Mr. Walter Crane, who is one of the leading spirits of this society, has defined its ends and aims in one of his manifestoes, in which he says: "We appeal to *all*, certainly, but cheapness in art is always impossible, except in the form of mechanical reproduction. Cheapness, as a rule, in the sense of low priced production, can only be obtained at the cost of cheapness—that is the cheapening of human life and labor, surely, in reality, a most wasteful and extravagant cheapness."

FROM this it will be inferred that the wares of the Arts and Crafts are necessarily costly, and therefore, can only appeal to those who have plenty of money, and are not intended to contribute their lessons of sweetness and light to the masses, that most hunger for such things. Their aim is to have the name of the designer, and also that of the workman who produced the article to appear, and so give direct recognition to the artist. While such a scheme is praiseworthy and may be possible in some cases, it must be remembered that there are many fine artists of necessity employed by the factory and middlemen they execrate whose names are not commercially important, and who might find it difficult to make a living, were they to throw up their present positions and adopt the methods of the Arts and Crafts.

The exhibition, viewed from the standpoint of the designer, as being simply a collection of designs in furniture and the like, is worthy of the highest praise, but to assume that the methods employed ought to be the beginning and end of modern furniture manufacture is a practical impossibility.

Aestheticism is a valuable property in the art of the cabinet maker, inlayer, turner and art metal worker, but in this Philistine age of machinery and competition, the necessities involved in the execution of large quantities of furniture by economical methods are hostile to patient individual effort, and demand the employment of other principles, if success is to be assured.

WHILE the other departments of our journal are of prime interest to professional decorators, we intend that the department of Amateur House Decoration shall be of special interest to Amateur Decorators. As referred to in our January issue, there are two kinds of decoration, viz.: Society and domestic decoration. In this department, the creation of a home is the object aimed at, wherein elegance does not override comfort, and yet a home in which many pretty things are employed to clothe the hard outlines of the modern dwelling.

The world is full of people with whom a lavish use of money is impossible, and the question of how to obtain artistic results at a low cost, is a vital one with the majority. To show how to do something durable and decorative, in the production of articles of convenience and beauty, from materials obtained at a trifling cost, will be a pleasing task, and in its performance we will continue to enlist the services of trained skill to guide our readers in producing tasteful articles of novel design.

Decoration that depends upon ingenious taste, rather than a display of wealth, is the main topic of our discourse, for the skillful selection of easy, substantial furnishings is the most potent force in producing warmth, richness and coziness.

Artistic results alone, however, is not to be the only question here discussed, for the greatest emphasis will, in future, be made regarding those parts of the house which most affect the daily health and happiness of the household. Sleeping rooms supplied with the best springs, mattresses and blankets, are to be preferred to the costliest cabinets, and a well-furnished and well-managed kitchen will give more contentment and happiness than luxurious apartments shared with the outside world, which are decorated at the expense of the more important parts.

Thus comfort and unpretentious beauty will be the twin spirit that will guide the discussions in our department of Amateur House Decoration.